

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00674 151012Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
SP-02 L-01 PM-03 DODE-00 PRS-01 IO-06 /045 W
-----151029Z 045838 /15

R 150923Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3067
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER

1. SUMMARY. DURING THE AMBASSADOR'S 45-MINUTE INITIAL CALL, LEBANESE FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS DISCUSSED THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN LEBANON, INCLUDING THE DESIRE OF SOME ELEMENTS FOR PARTITION, AND THE PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR MADE INITIIAL CALL ON GOL FONMIN CHIEF OF PROTOCOL AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MORNING FEB 14. DURING 45-MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH BOUTROS, AMBAASSADOR REITERATED REMARKS HE HAD MADE TO THE PRESS ON ARRIVAL EXPRESSING PLEASURE AT RETURNING TO LEBANON AND DESIRE OF USG TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS IN RESTORING SECURITY AND PROSPERITY TO LEBANON. BOUTROS WELCOMED THE AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL AND SAID GOL WAS COUNTING ON USG ASSISTANCE IN DIFFICULT DAYS AHEAD.

3. CONTACTS IN LEBANON. AMBASSADOR SAID HE PLANNED RENEW CONTACTS WITH A WIDE SPECTRUM OF LEBANESE PERSONALITIES HE HAD MET DURING HIS PREVIOUS SERVICE

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HERE. WAS THERE ANYONE GOL WOULD PREFER HE NOT SEE? BOUTROS SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA FOR HIM TO SEE EVERYONE, BUT HE SHOULD TREAT OLD POLS AS PRIVATE CITIZENS. DURING THE 12 MONTHS FROM NOVEMBER 1975 TO NOVEMBER 1976 THERE HAD BEEN A VACUUM OF OFFICIAL POWER IN LEBANON. DURING THIS PERIOD MANY LEBANESE POLITICAL PERSONALITIES BEHAVED AS THOUGH THEY SPOKE

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON. NOW THIS TIME WAS ENDED AND LEBANON HAD A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THE FOREIGN MINISTER THEREFORE HOPED THAT THE AMBASSADOR DURING HIS CALLS WOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT HE WAS VISITING THESE MEN AS REPRESENTATIVES OF CERTAIN POLITICAL TENDENCIES IN LEBANON BUT NOT AS THE POSSESSORS OF ANY OFFICIAL AUTHORITY. THIS, HE SAID, WOULD HELP TO DISCOURAGE MOVES TOWARDS PARTITION. BOUTROS SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW PARTITION WAS NOT A VIABLE OPTION FOR LEBANON BECAUSE THE RESULTING ENTITY WOULD BE AN ALIEN GHETTO, CREATED AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRIES AND EVEN MORE ISOLATED THEAN ISRAEL. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES IT COULD NOT SURVIVE AND WOULD BE A DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN AREA. IN FOREIGN MINISTER'S VIEW, NOTING SHOULD BE DONE AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT WHICH WOULD UPSET THE EQUILIBRIUM IN THE AREA.

4. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES. IN FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE KFUR FRONT CHRISTIANS, BOUTROS IMPLIED THAT SOME OF THEM APPEAR TO BE SUPPORTING PARTITION AS A NEGOTIATING TACTIC BUT A MINORITY HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT IT IS A VIABLE OPTION. THIS MINORITY, HE SAID, IS ENCOURAGED IN THIS BELIEF BECAUSE THEY THINK THEY HAVE THE BACKING OF THE UNITED STATES. THE FOREIGN MINISTER AGAIN MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT PRIVATELY WITH SECRETARY VANCE, DURING THE SECRETARY'S FORTHCOMING VISIT.

5. SOUTHERN LEBANON. IN A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF SOUTHERN CONFIDENTIAL

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LEBANON, THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE GOL HAD TAKEN A VERY COURAGEOUS AND WISE DECISION IN WITHDRAWING ASF TROOPS TO ASHIYAH. HE EXPRESSED REGRET AT WAY MATTER HAD BEEN LEAKED BY ISRAELIS, BUT NOTED THAT ISRAELIS USUALLY LEAKY. BOUTROS REPLIED THAT THIS ACTION HAD COST PRESIDENT SARKIS A GREAT DEAL OF HIS CREDIT WITH THE SYRIANS, ADDING: "WE CAN'T DO THIS SORT OF THING EVERY WEEK." BOUTROS SAID SITUATION IN THE SOUTH WAS AFFECTED BY ACTIONS OF PALESTINIANS AND BY DE FACTO ALLIANCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND SOME CHRISTIAN FORCES. HE AGAIN ASKED THAT WE USE OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE ISRAELIS 1) TO PREVENT THEM FROM STIRRING UP TROUBLE ON THE BORDER, AND 2) TO PERSUADE THEM TO RESTRAIN THEIR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS. IN DISCUSSING THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING A LEBANESE FORCE TO ESTABLISH SECURITY IN THE AREA, BOUTROS REPEATED THAT THIS WAS A DIFFICULT TASK. TO USE A LEBANESE FORCE THAT HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE RECENT FIGHTING WOULD CREATE MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT WOULD SOLVE, BECAUSE ONE FACTION OR

ANOTHER WOULD BE BOUND TO SEE IT AS A CHALLENGE.

6. COMMENT: THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS FRANK AND OPEN
IN HIS DISCUSSION OF LEBANON'S PROBLEMS AND OBVIOUSLY
WELCOMED THE RETURN OF AN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO
LEBANON.

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BEIRUT00674
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770053-0425
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770242/aaaablan.tel
Line Count: 123
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 994bcec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3324131
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER
TAGS: PFOR, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/994bcec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009